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ABSTRACT

In response to findings in a 1994 accountability report, and specifically data related to student retention, colleges in the Illinois Community College System were asked to report on local initiatives to track and improve retention. In describing their retention initiatives, 30 colleges specifically mentioned assessment and placement activities, with most colleges requiring mandatory placement activities. Thirty-two colleges described components of their advisement/counseling program, with several colleges indicating that they train a broader cross-section of staff for advising positions and use more computer technology. Eight colleges indicated that they use mentoring programs, while 14 colleges created or revised student orientation processes. Eight colleges noted enhancements to workshops and seminars aimed at student retention, while another 14 colleges had enhanced their student tracking systems. Fifteen colleges noted increased efforts to coordinate collegewide retention programs, while specific initiatives to enhance student services were described by eight colleges. Other programs included allowing students to change sequential courses during the first 4 weeks and early registration procedures. An appendix provides a description of retention initiatives at each of the 49 community colleges. (MAB)

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ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY: RETENTION INITIATIVES IN THE ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

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ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY: RETENTION INITIATIVES IN THE ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Developing strategies for increasing student retention is among the most important issues in higher education today. Community college faculty, staff, and administrators have a keen interest in this topic. Students come to community colleges with diverse educational backgrounds, skills, abilities, and expectations. Hence, providing programs and services which facilitate their movement from where they are to where they want to be is both challenging and rewarding. Since Illinois community colleges operate in a nonresidential setting, they must put forth additional efforts for students to become further integrated, both socially and academically, at the college. Community college officials also recognize that they serve an older student body who often have work and family responsibilities which compete for their time. Providing courses and services on a flexible schedule is especially important for these students. Students who make a commitment to self-improvement through college attendance should be given an opportunity to succeed. Community colleges offer students this opportunity. To help students fulfill their goals, colleges offer affordable comprehensive programming, an extensive array of support services, small class sizes with increased opportunities for student/teacher interaction, and a variety of innovative approaches to increasing student success.

In last year's *Accountability and Productivity Report for the Illinois Community College System* (September 1994), institutional and course retention rates were analyzed systemwide and by institution. College were asked to review data from the report and provide information about local initiatives to track and improve student retention. In response to this request, the colleges reported on a variety of innovative activities to reduce attrition and accentuate student success. Highlights from college responses are described in this report. Further details about initiatives at individual colleges are provided in the Appendix. Several major themes were evident in college descriptions of their retention programs, including improvements in assessment and placement, advisement and counseling, mentoring, student orientation, student tracking systems, coordination of retention activities, special workshops and seminars designed to build skills and enhance retention, and increasing the space allocated or emphasis on Student Services.

Assessment and Placement. Community colleges routinely assess entering students in basic academic subjects which normally include English, reading, and mathematics. Proper placement of students is alluded to in the *Illinois Public Community College Act*:

> "After entry the college shall counsel and distribute the students among its programs according to their interests and abilities."
> *Illinois Public Community College Act, Illinois Revised Statutes*, Chapter 122, Paragraph 103-17.

Advisory course placement (once the norm) is being replaced by mandatory course placement. Placing a student in the level of coursework which is appropriate to their existing skills is a critical component in college retention initiatives. Improper placement contributes to situations where a student is unable to keep up with the pace of the class, which can lead to frustration and withdrawal or failure. Thirty colleges specifically mentioned their assessment and placement plans as vital to their overall retention programs. The following colleges described components of their assessment and placement programs: Belleville Area College, Black Hawk College, Chicago Malcolm X College, Chicago Olive-Harvey College, Chicago Harry S Truman College, Chicago Wilbur Wright College, College of DuPage, Elgin Community College, Heartland Community College, Highland Community College, Illinois Eastern Lincoln Trail College, Illinois Eastern Olney Central College, Illinois Eastern Wabash Valley College, Joliet Junior College, College of Lake County, Lincoln Land Community College, Moraine Valley Community College, Morton College, Oakton Community College, Parkland College, Prairie State College, Rend Lake College, Richland Community College, Rock Valley College, Carl Sandburg College, Sauk Valley Community College, South Suburban College, Shawnee Community College, Triton College, and Waubonsee Community College. For example, the instructional program at Waubonsee Community College has been directed toward an outcome-driven Assessment of Academic Achievement Model which includes mandatory student assessment and placement. Similarly, College of DuPage is implementing a collegewide Plan for Assessment of Student Academic Achievement. Likewise, Carl Sandburg College operates an Assessment Center with broad-based support. Other colleges stressed their "at-risk" early student identification procedures and follow-up intervention systems as areas where recent improvements were made. Colleges specifically mentioning such initiatives included Black Hawk College, Chicago Malcolm X College, Moraine Valley Community College, Parkland College, Prairie State College, Rend Lake College, Richland Community College, South Suburban College, Triton College, and Waubonsee Community College. Relatedly, at Prairie State College, a pre-assessment test math workshop is being pilot tested. The workshop is designed to help students who have math skills, but have not used them recently, refresh their memories prior to testing. A short refresher workshop is all that some students need rather than an entire course. At Belleville Area College, to increase retention rates, the Extension Center Program tracks students by extension site and offers expanded on-site services in testing and academic support.

Advisement and Counseling. Advisors and counselors who have a thorough knowledge of college academic programs and student support services can act in an important capacity to help students develop a cohesive strategy for achieving their educational goals and objectives. Thirty-two colleges described components of their advisement and/or counseling programs which are a part of their overall student retention program. The following colleges made special mention of enhancements to their advisement and counseling programs: Chicago Richard J. Daley College, Chicago Malcolm X College, Chicago Olive-Harvey College, Chicago Kennedy-King College, Chicago Harry S Truman College, Chicago Harold Washington College, Chicago Wilbur Wright College, Danville Area Community College, Elgin Community College, William Rainey Harper College, Heartland Community College, Highland Community College, Illinois Eastern Frontier College, Illinois Eastern Lincoln Trail College, Illinois Eastern Olney Central College, Illinois Eastern Wabash Valley College, Illinois Valley Community College, Joliet Junior College, Kankakee Community College, College of Lake County, John A. Logan

College, McHenry County College, Moraine Valley Community College, Parkland College, Rend Lake College, Richland Community College, Rock Valley College, Carl Sandburg College, South Suburban College, Southeastern Illinois College, Spoon River College, and Waubonsee Community College.

Academic advisement, academic support services, and intrusive types of counseling are receiving increased attention as important retention mechanisms. Waubonsee Community College officials have developed a new Academic Advisement Plan to provide an increased level of service to students. Rock Valley College operates a certified tutoring program in the Personalized Learning Center to provide additional student assistance. At Prairie State College, a post-placement test advising system has been undergoing pilot testing. Systemwide, faculty often assist in the advisement of students in their major area. Chicago Harold Washington College, John A. Logan College, and Richland Community College mentioned recent movement to involve a broad cross-section of college professional staff in the advisement process. At John A. Logan College, a revised approach to academic advisement is being undertaken. As the system is implemented, all new students will be seen one-on-one by advisors. After the initial session, a student will be assigned a specific advisor who will work with the individual for an extended period of time. Some students will be eligible for fast-track advising, but most will be encouraged to schedule sessions with their advisors. Selected faculty, staff, and administrators will be trained and assume advisement responsibilities. All advisors will have computers and enter student schedules into the system after they are agreed upon with the student. This arrangement provides an opportunity to build a long-term relationship between the advisor and the student and keeps an ongoing record of a student's progress toward academic goals. The retention literature suggests that students who have established a sense of belonging and affiliation with the college are less at-risk for attrition. Illinois Central College operates an Academic Discovery Center to "at-risk" students. McHenry County College is targeting counselor support to adult reentry and special needs students.

Technology has been used to enhance the advisement process. At the College of Lake County, a collegewide computer-supported advising system was operationalized two years ago enabling college officials to identify and communicate with program majors upon first registration. Identified students are encouraged to meet with a divisional counselor prior to registration to carefully complete the course selection process. College faculty and staff thoroughly review course prerequisites so students enter courses with requisite skills, thus with a better likelihood of completing the course. At South Suburban College, software has been developed so that the computer system will not allow students to register for classes unless they have the appropriate course prerequisites. Similarly, a computer blocking system will not allow students to enroll in selected courses until they have achieved a predetermined reading level. Prairie State College is taking a comprehensive look at course prerequisites. The course outlines for all 441 college offerings were revised, updated, and placed in a uniform format for ease of use by students. Related initiatives at Joliet Junior College include developing an on-line articulation system for easy updates and accurate transfer information and making automated guidance information available to students and faculty. Similarly, McHenry County College officials are working to provide computer-accessible, consistent, and up-to-date materials on course articulation.

Mentoring. Mentoring programs always involve pairing a student with someone who can serve as a role model, provide encouragement, and help that individual make appropriate decisions. One approach to a mentoring program involves pairing a new or "at-risk" student with another student who comes from a similar background, but has an established track record of success at the college. A second approach is to pair an entering or "at-risk" student with a compatible member of the college's faculty and staff. In successful mentoring relationships, a bond forms over time between the two individuals involved which contributes to the new or "at-risk" student's increased sense of connection to the college. The following colleges specifically mentioned operating mentoring programs on campus: Belleville Area College, Chicago Richard J. Daley College, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College, Kankakee Community College, Sauk Valley Community College, State Community College, and Spoon River College. One example is a student liaison/mentor project at Belleville Area College that is operating in conjunction with the LACE Program, which provides extensive academic support to students in 14 key occupational programs. Since Elgin Community College has begun attracting additional international students, to the campus they have started an International Student Mentor Program. The project operates in conjunction with the college's international student orientation sessions which are held at the beginning of each semester for students who are new to this country and/or on student visas. Sauk Valley Community College designed a peer mentoring program to provide additional support and assistance to their students. Kankakee Community College is expanding its student mentoring program into the community to involve area professionals in the project.

New or Revised Student Orientation Sessions. Getting off to a good start in college is often a matter of developing and implementing study and time management skills, recognizing the warning signs when performance begins to falter, knowing where to go for help, and reaching out for assistance. These are precisely the types of skills and knowledge that Student Orientation courses and seminars provide. Community colleges have extensive support services to promote student success, and orientation sessions are an effective mechanism for helping spread the message about the availability of these services. The following colleges specifically mentioned enhancing their Student Orientation programs: Black Hawk College, Danville Area Community College, Elgin Community College, William Rainey Harper College, Illinois Eastern Frontier College, Joliet Junior College, Lincoln Land Community College, John A. Logan College, Moraine Valley Community College, Parkland College, Richland Community College, Sauk Valley Community College, Spoon River College, and Triton College. For example, Richland Community College is developing a three-phase orientation program which is "customized" for different segments of the student population. One approach will target "at-risk" students. A second will target developmental and lower entry-level course takers. A third will address the needs of other students. Spoon River College revised its Student Orientation Program to supply students with more in-depth information about the support services available at the college. Academic advisors help staff the orientation sessions. A complete redesign of the Triton Student Orientation Program for new students grew out of the retention data analysis and issues discussions. Team leaders have been incorporated into the orientation program to increase individualized student attention. For traditional age Triton College students, a parent component is being implemented in fall 1996.

Special Workshops and Seminars. Relatedly, college officials conduct special workshops and seminars for faculty, staff, and students that are aimed at building skills to help students succeed. Eight colleges noted enhancements to special workshops and seminars offered to promote retention: Chicago Harold Washington College, Danville Area Community College, Heartland Community College, Illinois Eastern Frontier College, Kankakee Community College, Kishwaukee College, South Suburban College, and Spoon River College. At Danville Area Community College, all faculty, staff, and administrators have received continuous quality improvement/total quality management training with an emphasis on how these strategies can be used to increase student retention. At Kankakee Community College, officials are developing a student retention conference for community colleges regionally and statewide. The staff at Kishwaukee College recognized that retention of students is a collegewide effort, not only that of the faculty, so they suspended a full day of classes in April 1995 for a Student Success Workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to foster greater staff awareness of their role in student success; develop greater awareness of the diversity of students and their needs; analyze problems and develop creative but realistic solutions, along with the enthusiasm to implement them; and promote sharing and a sense of interconnectedness in this campuswide effort.

Student Tracking Systems. Computerized student tracking systems are a necessary tool for performing a broad-based assessment of student progress. Appropriate hardware, software, and reporting systems are needed to document student performance. Well designed tracking systems facilitate the ability of college officials to make informed decisions about the impact of specific initiatives. Fourteen colleges mentioned enhancements to student tracking systems: Belleville Area College, Black Hawk College, Danville Area Community College, Chicago Olive-Harvey College, Chicago Harold Washington College, College of DuPage, Elgin Community College, Illinois Eastern Frontier College, Illinois Eastern Lincoln Trail College, Illinois Eastern Olney Central College, Illinois Eastern Wabash Valley College, Kankakee Community College, John A. Logan College, and Southeastern Illinois College. All four Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, Joliet Junior College, and John A. Logan College are designing or implementing on-line degree audit capability into their computer systems and making the results available to advisors with rapid turnaround. Computerized degree audits allow students to receive quick feedback regarding the progress they are making to their goals. They provide information which can be used to design a schedule of courses that will lead most directly to the desired student outcome. At Highland Community College, several important changes resulted from student tracking initiatives, including a refocusing of Student Support Service programs for targeted populations, revising the faculty student referral system, and enhancing the resources and personnel available through the Learning Assistance Center.

Enhancements to the Coordination of Collegewide Retention Efforts. Several colleges mentioned that they have made recent structural changes to the coordination of retention programs with the aim of increasing collegewide involvement. Three colleges (Sauk Valley Community College, Shawnee Community College, and Southeastern Illinois College) designated specific new positions to oversee the coordination of institutional retention initiatives. Typically, an administrator in the student affairs division of a college will assume oversight responsibilities for institutional retention initiatives. Shawnee Community College has formed a Retention and Recruitment Committee and hired a Coordinator of Retention and Recruitment. Southeastern Illinois College's Retention Specialist distributes to key administrators weekly reports listing

students who have been dropped by instructors for nonattendance. Relatedly, instructors can complete a "Retention Services Request" form for students with unexcused or unexplained absences. Other college staff follow-up with students and inform the instructors of actions taken. Sauk Valley Community College's Coordinator of Student Retention has duties which include coordinating assessment, placement, and student orientation.

A dozen colleges specifically mentioned their reliance on a committee to direct their retention efforts: Black Hawk College, William Rainey Harper College, Illinois Eastern Frontier College, Illinois Eastern Lincoln Trail College, College of Lake County, Lake Land College, Moraine Valley Community College, Morton College, Richland Community College, Shawnee Community College, and Triton College. At Black Hawk College, a cross-functional retention team, led by the Dean of Student Services has gathered relevant data, studied exemplary models, and recommended specific improvements to college operations. At Morton College, an Institutional Effectiveness Committee devised a Plan for Assessing Academic Achievement with an aim of increasing retention. Similarly, Moraine Valley Community College has a collegewide enrollment Management Committee which has nearly completed an Institutional Retention Plan. Likewise, College of Lake County's collegewide Retention Committee is developing a retention plan to coordinate and extend the individual efforts which are occurring on campus.

Increased Space Allocated to, or Emphasis on, Student Services. Student Service functions are being enhanced at eight colleges. Either the square footage allotted to the function is being increased on campus or the function is receiving additional emphasis. Colleges moving in this direction include Danville Area Community College, Elgin Community College, Illinois Central College, John A. Logan College, Parkland College, Prairie State College, Shawnee Community College, and South Suburban College. The Financial Aid Office is a vital service center for many community college students. South Suburban College expanded the space available for the Financial Aid Office based on increased student demand. Danville Area Community College, Elgin Community College, John A. Logan College, Parkland College, Prairie State College, and Shawnee Community College have all strengthened their Financial Aid Office operations. At South Suburban College, space for small group meeting rooms has been designated to allow faculty to meet with students for study sessions.

Other Student Retention Initiatives. While activities at some colleges did not fit into one of the categories precisely, the ideas had widespread applicability. At Rock Valley College, students are allowed to change sequential courses during the first four weeks of the semester if it becomes apparent that their skills are not well matched with the level of instruction. Rock Valley College also provides special early registration procedures which allow students who successfully complete remedial English to register for college-level English before the sections start filling up. At Morton College, Cross and Angelo's ideas about classroom assessment and its contribution to retaining students are being implemented. Mechanisms for rapidly assessing student comprehension levels and appropriate teaching modifications are employed. John A. Logan College is in the midst of a five-year Title III grant-funded project to develop a Comprehensive Student Success and Retention Program. Major components of the project include development of an improved computer-assisted advisement system, training for faculty advisors and student services staff in developmental advising, development of a Freshman Orientation Seminar, development of an improved system of assessment through computer-

adaptive assessment, and development of career counseling services. At Lake Land College, student's telephone numbers are included in 10th day course rosters, and faculty are encouraged to contact students whose attendance is sporadic.

Summary and Conclusions

Community colleges exist to help the citizens of Illinois meet their educational goals and training needs. Although many positive initiatives are underway, community colleges must continue their efforts to strengthen student retention. The colleges have formulated a variety of retention strategies to facilitate the attainment of desired student outcomes. Several major themes were evident in college descriptions of their retention programs, including the following:

- Thirty colleges specifically mentioned their **assessment and placement** activities as vital to their overall retention programs. At most colleges, course placement in academic areas is mandatory, based on test results.

- Thirty-two colleges described components of their **advisement and/or counseling** programs which are a part of their overall student retention program. Several colleges indicated that they are training a broader cross-section of college staff for involvement in the advising process and using computer technology to provide rapid access to information for advisement.

- Eight colleges described **mentoring** programs that are provided to selected students. Mentoring programs involve pairing a student with someone who can serve as a role model, provide encouragement, and help that individual make appropriate decisions.

- Fourteen colleges created or revised **student orientation** processes. Seminars and courses typically include information about study skills, expectations regarding college-level work, and information pertaining to available student support programs services.

- Eight colleges noted enhancements to the **special workshops and seminars** offered to promote retention.

- **Student tracking systems** were mentioned by 14 colleges as an important mechanism for helping understand retention issues.

- Fifteen colleges reported some initiative aimed at **better coordinating collegewide retention efforts**. While a few colleges created a new position to meet this need, most of the respondents formed a committee to focus on retention issues.

- Specific initiatives to **enhance student services** were described by eight colleges.

- **Other activities** directed at increasing retention at four colleges are also included in the report.

Recent research reinforces a need for a paradigm shift in thinking about community college student expectations. For some students in the community college setting, course retention is more relevant than certificate and degree completion. While there is a contingent of students who enroll full time for the equivalent of two years, they are the exception rather than the rule. Students are more likely to attend on a part-time basis and may be more interested in achieving their own goals than earning a formal credential. Community colleges will continue to actively promote lifelong learning and help students pursue their goals. A recent book describes the manner in which many students make use of community college programs and services.

> The institution (community colleges) seems to function is a variety of what I call "occasional" roles. In more common phrasing, it serves individuals for *ad hoc* purposes... An institution capable of an occasional role must be flexible, tractable and penetrable...
>
> ... Students in all attendance patterns knew that the community college would do something for them, would get them from here to there. Even if they were constrained by geography, family circumstances, poor academic preparation or socioeconomic status, they seemed to make of the community college what they wanted to make of it. They used the institution for a period of time, and then moved on.
> *The Way We Are: The Community College as American Thermometer*, Clifford Adelman, (1992), pp. 22-23.

An upcoming statewide study of "nonreturning" students will examine some of the factors which contribute to student departure and provide additional information about the extent to which exiting students are satisfied with the programs and services they received at the community college.

APPENDIX A

Community College Retention Initiatives by Institution

BELLEVILLE AREA COLLEGE - The Registrar's Office is tracking all students indicating an associate's degree as their goal, evaluating records for degree requirements each semester. Students with a minimum of 45 hours are targeted for further follow-up. Special measures to increase the retention of "at-risk" students have been developed by Belleville's Counseling Department. As a result, students are identified for counseling intervention much earlier than in the past. Belleville's LACE Program enhances retention by providing extensive academic support for 14 key occupational programs. An allied program will become operational in fall 1995 so identified students will receive specialized assistance through student liaisons. At Belleville, to increase retention rates, the Extension Center Program tracks students by extension site and is offering expanded on-site services in testing, academic support, and counseling. The Adult Education Program has developed a program to retain GED graduates and enhance subsequent enrollments into college-level programs. These efforts are considerably facilitated by a decision to invest in SIS software for student tracking and through a new employee training program that emphasizes customer service and student retention.

BLACK HAWK COLLEGE - A cross-functional retention team, led by the Dean of Student Services, has gathered relevant data, studied exemplary models, and recommended a number of improvements. A comprehensive tracking and follow-up system is designed to identify students who have stalled out, stopped out, or are experiencing difficulties. Freshman orientation has been expanded, reading placement has been implemented for underprepared students, and more timely and effective intervention for underperforming students occurs. To improve course and cohort retention, the Director of Advisement and Faculty Senates are collaborating on the design of various and appropriate academic interventions.

CHICAGO RICHARD J. DALEY COLLEGE - The college established a unit under the Dean of Students to work exclusively on tracking and improving student retention. The personnel meet with students on academic warning and those on academic probation. The facilitators work with the college counselors and a faculty team to oversee the academic probation process. Student facilitators set up tutorial sessions for students and track counseling sessions that petitioning students are required to attend.

CHICAGO KENNEDY-KING COLLEGE - Strengthening the Academic Support Service programs is seen as a key to improving student retention. The college's Academic Support Services have set a goal to increase overall student contact by 10 percent. Instructional activities in Academic Support Services include tutoring, learning laboratories, NovaNET/PLATO, the Media Center, and the Academic Enrichment Center. Noninstructional units include academic computing, testing and assessment, special needs student services, and audio-visual. Selected improvements which they are striving for in Support Service Programs include strengthening customer service, increasing professional development opportunities for staff, implementing a certification process for tutors, developing additional materials for the English as a Second Language program, campaigning for a college credit study skills course, improving departmental management and refining indicators of departmental effectiveness, and upgrading facilities in response to program needs.

CHICAGO MALCOLM X COLLEGE - The college has implemented a computerized academic alert system which monitors warning signs of academic failure. The Academic Support Center

is scheduled for renovation and new equipment during the coming year.

CHICAGO OLIVE-HARVEY COLLEGE - The college has a retention rate higher than its district average, but slightly lower than the state average. The data provided a basis for the development of several college goals and objectives designed to track and improve student retention in three primary areas: (1) Testing and Placement (2) Student Services, and (3) Monitoring Student Progress and Outcomes. To improve the retention rate of students, the college will establish exit testing and assessment measures that define standards of student placement in and transition from one course level to the next level, through advisement ensure the accurate placement of new students based on placement test scores, develop a comprehensive admission, readmission and monitoring plan to improve the success rate of students, install a computerized student tracking system, and establish a student support services network that provides a comprehensive sequence of specialized services.

CHICAGO HARRY S TRUMAN COLLEGE - Retention is one of the critical factors in determining program quality at the college. The college uses ICCB retention data for analyses. An Early Warning System in the four targeted Perkins programs identifies and tracks students who are underperforming by midterm, who are then referred to counseling or tutorial services. A student satisfaction survey was conducted to help determine retention strategies to be implemented in June 1996. In June 1995, career and testing assessment equipment will be installed in the Special Needs Office. Writing-Across-the-Curriculum will be implemented in line with district-level initiatives.

CHICAGO HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE - Student retention assessment has been one of the college's primary focuses this year. Staff members are currently in the process of determining the best instrument to assess critical thinking skills of students, in an effort to improve teaching and learning. Efforts are also being made in all of the student services areas to establish data bases to track students. A new Student Advisement Handbook was produced for all faculty advisors. Next year, the college will implement advising workshops, as well as increased support services for students.

CHICAGO WILBUR WRIGHT COLLEGE - The college has a three-fold plan for monitoring and addressing student retention issues. This plan involves (1) surveying nonreturning students between the fall and spring semesters to determine their reasons for not returning to the college; (2) tracking the highest risk categories of students -- those in pre-credit and developmental English, reading, and math classes -- through seven consecutive semesters; and 3) monitoring full-time and part-time faculty course retention rates each term and targeting problem areas for action by both the department and the Dean of Instruction.

DANVILLE AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE - With a 47 percent retention rate, the college recognizes the need to improve retention strategies. The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative leads the review and planning process for improved retention focusing on two principles: (1) retention is an institutionwide problem (not a student services problem or a faculty problem) and (2) students are our customers. The college lists ten retention initiatives/ actions that have been put into place in the past year in Tutoring, Special Populations, Career Services, Opportunities, Counseling, Health Services, Admissions, Financial Aid, Developmental

Education and Faculty. In overall college initiatives, the college has made improvements in student orientation and placement testing; expanded social/athletic environment opportunities; formed a Diversity Team; has a Tech Prep initiative; holds on-site registration; extended student service hours; added a Coordinator of Accountability, Assessment & Planning to track student progress; and CQI Training for all faculty, staff, and administration.

COLLEGE OF DUPAGE - Although the college's overall retention rate exceeded the peer group average and state average, there is still much interest in improving retention. A Plan for the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement was approved by the NCA earlier this year. In addition, a student tracking system is now in place. With these initiatives in place, the college hopes to more systematically evaluate how it is helping students to achieve their college-related personal, academic, and career goals and identify opportunities for increased institutional effectiveness.

ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Local retention analyses and reporting have been established at the institutional and course levels and have been incorporated into various planning processes, including the NCA Accreditation Self-study, program review, and course scheduling analyses. The ECC Student Tracking System and Illinois Shared Database are used to provide retention information on cohorts beginning in fiscal year 1991. Specific initiatives include expanded orientation programs, including international student orientation, multicultural admissions support, a strong college scholarship program, International Student Mentor Program, and English Language immersion Program; strengthened transition support to college level from GED graduates; and actively promoting The Learning Center's services. The Nursing Department has developed support mechanisms and is developing curriculum revisions to enhance retention, particularly in minorities, while the Liberal Arts & Human Services Division has committed to determining entry skill requirements for courses to support student retention and success.

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE - Focus on retention is implemented through the collegewide retention (Student Success) committee. A major initiative of the committee focuses on identifying at-risk students at entry. A program has been designed for students who had graduated in the bottom third of their high school class. Since the initiation of the program, the percentage of lower quartile students who earned a 2.0 or better in their first semester has risen from 33 percent to 49 percent. The college's SOAP (Standards of Academic Performance) program provides a safety net for at-risk students and is activated as soon as a student attempts seven hours of study with below a 2.0 grade point average. The Student Success Committee has initiated dialogue on innovative teaching and, along with faculty development efforts, has been working to identify effective strategies to be used in the classroom.

HEARTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE - The college utilizes several strategies to track and improve student retention. The strategies begin upon student enrollment in the college and continue through their studies. The Early Warning System allows faculty to alert Student Services of concerns regarding student performance. Through the Early Alert System, students complete an early formative evaluation of new faculty members. Assessment, Tutoring, and Notetaking services are provided for students. Instructional Assistants, along with special instructional materials, work with students in the classroom to improve success. Academic

support sponsors several seminars to meet student needs. Topics include time management, math anxiety, reading a textbook, notetaking, learning styles, test strategies, proofreading, choosing a college major, and studying for finals.

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Since fiscal year 1991, students entering Highland Community College have been tracked using three cohort definitions: (1) Students entering as new students are tracked for two years, (2) students completing the fall semester and retaining a full-time status are tracked for two years, and (3) a student entering as a first-time, full-time student is tracked for three years in a manner consistent with Student-Right-To-Know requirements. Withdrawal rates within courses are tracked to provide advisors with profiles of course completion expectations and to provide baseline data for types and skills of students successful in general education and other courses. The data obtained has influenced the types of retention activities provided by the college. A revision of placement procedures was initiated, a refocusing of Student Support Services program was implemented for targeted populations, the faculty student referral system was revised, and resources and personnel available to the Learning Assistance Center were enhanced.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE - The 1993-1994 fall retention rate improved from 60 percent to 62 percent. Fall-to-spring retention increased from 80 percent to 83 percent. A 10 percent gain in retention was achieved in at-risk students participating in the Academic Discovery Program compared to nonparticipants.

ILLINOIS EASTERN FRONTIER COLLEGE - The Frontier College Retention Plan was implemented in spring 1993. Initiatives implemented to track and improve student retention included the following: (1) Increase institutional awareness through a retention newsletter (including retention strategies) sent to all part- and full-time faculty, (2) data collection - midterm progress reports are routed through advisors' office, (3) student intervention - orientation course developed to act as a support class, (4) a resource directory for outside assistance is made available to staff, (5) a retention workshop to improve customer service was presented to all staff, (6) policies are examined, (7) the Registrar's office monitors the retention rate, and (8) new instructors are provided with a retention packet that provides retention strategies.

ILLINOIS EASTERN LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE - Retention initiatives have been enhanced with two federal Grants. Through a Title III grant entitled "Model for Student Success," the college will be able to collect, monitor, integrate, and evaluate information that will enable staff to determine which students are at risk and improve its ability to assure appropriate placement, enable the college to intervene at critical junctures to increase the likelihood of success, and improve the accuracy and accessibility of career and degree advisement. A Title IV grant called "Success Network Program" provides intensive supportive services such as advising, study skills classes, and special seminars to first generation, low income, and disabled students. These services are in addition to those normally provided to students. One of the three major goals of the college's Long-Range Planning Committee focuses on student success and retention. In addition, degree audit software has been installed to assist students in tracking their progress towards completion. An early alert system, which currently notifies failing students at midterm and alerts them of support services, is in review.

ILLINOIS EASTERN OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE - Using Title II grant monies, the college hired an additional counselor to assist at-risk students. Class withdrawal procedures have been revised to decrease the number of students dropping courses. Degree audit software is currently being tested and will be made available to students and staff. An early alert system is in review to determine if an earlier time frame would improve retention.

ILLINOIS EASTERN WABASH VALLEY COLLEGE - An Assessment Plan was recently developed. Several areas of the plan target retention of students. A districtwide task force was formed in February 1994 to study retention and set strategic goals and priorities. As a result, Horizons software was purchased to assist in career search job availability, scholarships, etc. In addition, student opinion surveys were utilized to assess campus services. Results are used to review services and determine improvements. Degree audit software is being tested to assist students and advisors. An early alert system is in review to determine if an earlier time frame would improve retention.

ILLINOIS VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE - All college faculty and administrative staff were oriented to retention in 1990 as an institutional goal. The Director of Admissions and Dean of Instruction have college counselors working with degree/certificate seeking students, and prepared catalog copy to emphasize the need and rewards for completing their programs. Emphasis has been placed upon the advantages at senior colleges and job placement opportunities. Program completion signs have been posted on bulletin boards throughout the campus.

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE - The college has listed many varied retention initiatives. To improve the social climate for new and continuing students, the college will develop more student clubs based on students' interest, match new students with continuing students from the same or nearby town, take pictures of students and post so students can become acquainted, and promote student introductions and sharing of interest and goals at first class meetings. Improvements to the students' safety include installation of better lighting in parking lots, implementation of better full-time campus security strategies, and provision of loss prevention and safety tips for students while on campus and in their automobiles. The college also will encourage and promote instructors to incorporate group projects within the classes, encourage students to form study groups, and calling students upon their second consecutive or third absence. Another initiative is to develop a "Tips for Success" booklet for students based upon actual experiences of Joliet Junior College students. Other initiatives at Joliet include (1) automate the transcript evaluation process; (2) develop an on-line articulation system for easy updates and accurate information for transfer students; (3) continue working to alleviate purge problems in the registration computer system; (4) make automated guidance information available to students and faculty; (5) hold group sessions across disciplines to share recruitment needs; (6) survey students (high risk, leavers, those who stay); (7) set up a volunteer mentor program; (8) promote the Honors Program and Societies and Orientation for returning adults; (9) provide internships, field trips, etc. aimed at career planning and application of classroom knowledge; and (10) link the college to transfer, career area, and work goals so students can become aware of what's required for each path.

KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - The philosophy of the Office of Retention has been to provide a comprehensive student retention program that integrates the support services of the academic and student service areas. The office has built an integrated infrastructure and is pivotal for students in terms of tracking (monitoring) and support for the student from day one of entrance into the college environment. The retention office provides support to students, faculty, and college personnel on a continual basis. The office works closely with the FIPSE Program and encourages students from diverse backgrounds to become involved in and with the retention office. Overall, the Office of Student Retention works closely with every facet of Student Services. The program measures programmatic quality through student mentoring, student orientation, student success, student exit interviews. Future innovations include (1) develop and implement a two-tiered "early-bird" student follow-up program with faculty and the Director of Student Retention, (2) develop a student retention newsletter for spring and fall terms, (3) develop a fall student retention conference for community colleges regionally and statewide, (4) expand the student mentoring program into the community, and (5) investigate the use of technology to link with other student retention programs to exchange ideas and build cooperative projects. In the last year, student retention has increased by 4 percent, a student mentoring program was implemented, a tracking system was organized, and a retention support service established for all "at-risk" students.

KASKASKIA COLLEGE - Kaskaskia College has an overall retention rate of 52 percent. This is determined by tracking the students that enrolled in the first semester and determining if they enrolled in the second semester. No allowance has been made for mid-year individuals who are a planned transfer but did not indicate this previously.

KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE - Realizing that retention of students is a collegewide effort, and not only that of the faculty, the college suspended day classes on April 25, 1995 for a "Student Success Workshop." The purpose of the workshop was to (1) foster greater staff awareness of our being key players in student success; (2) provide practical hints and methods to impact student success; (3) develop greater awareness of the diversitv of students and their needs; (4) analyze problems and develop realistic and creative approaches to their solutions; (5) generate new ideas on student success and the energy to use these ideas; (6) promote sharing and a sense of interconnectedness campuswide; and (7) stimulate the exchange of ideas among colleagues.

COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY - The college implemented a collegewide computer-supported advising system two years ago, enabling them to identify and communicate with program majors upon first registration. The identified students are encouraged to see a divisional counselor prior to registration for thoughtful course selection. College faculty and staff thoroughly review course prerequisites so students enter courses with the required skills, thus with a better likelihood to complete the course. The college has also begun a pilot program called "Learning in Community" (LINC) to support students of color, first generation college students, and other students who may be at risk. Programs and disciplines where attrition is a major problem were identified and targets established for improvement. Research was conducted during 1994-1995 to study ways to improve the retention of basic skills students. This will be a major focus of

college attention in 1995-1996. A collegewide retention committee, which is developing a retention plan to coordinate and extend all of these individual efforts, has been formed at the college.

LAKE LAND COLLEGE - Telephone numbers are included in 10th day course rosters and faculty are encouraged to contact students whose attendance is sporadic. A pilot test in Business where students with low grades and/or not attending regularly were sent letters and instructed to meet with their instructors to discuss any difficulties they were encountering in the course. The project is scheduled for expansion in the coming year. A collegewide Retention Committee meets regularly to develop ideas and approaches to increase student success. Students who did not graduate and do not reenroll at the college for a given semester are sent a letter just before course materials are mailed out for the next semester encouraging them to return to college.

LEWIS & CLARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE - The college's Assessment Center administers college placement testing and classroom make-up tests. The assessment process in adult education has been strengthened with input from the Adult Education Area Planning Council.

LINCOLN LAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE - The college has examined retention as a part of its North Central Accreditation study. A College Success Committee has been formed to address issues surrounding student retention and completion. It is likely that a college success skills course will become mandatory for all students who have been identified as being "at-risk." Topics covered in the course include college life skills, classroom skills, use of the learning resources center, and career planning. Additionally, blocks of developmental courses may become a requirement for these students.

JOHN A. LOGAN COLLEGE - John A. Logan College is in the midst of a five-year Title III grant-funded project to develop a Comprehensive Student Success and Retention Program. Major components of the project include development of an improved computer-assisted advisement system, training for faculty advisors and student services staff in developmental advising, development of a Freshman Orientation Seminar, development of an improved assessment system through computer-adaptive assessment, and development of career counseling services. A revised approach to academic advisement is being undertaken. As the system is implemented, all new students will be seen one-on-one by advisors. After the initial session, a student will be assigned a specific advisor who will work with the individual for an extended period of time. Selected faculty, staff, and administrators will be trained and assume advisement responsibilities. All advisors will have computers and enter student schedules into the system after they are agreed upon with the student. Fast-track advising will be available to selected students. An on-line degree audit capability is being designed and available to advisors with turnaround in a matter of a few minutes. The Financial Assistance Office and Student Support Services have collaborated on an Academic Appeal Program. Students who are ineligible to receive financial assistance may achieve reinstatement by successfully completing the Academic Appeal program, which focuses on student accountability and responsibility as essential components of reinstatement.

MCHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE - The college is working to provide students with computer-accessible consistent and up-to-date materials on course articulation. A new kiosk with touch

screen computer access will be purchased for this project. The software will be tied into the college's mainframe and contain information about course articulation to selected senior institutions. Another retention initiative will target counseling support services to adult reentry and special needs students. Three part-time counselors will be hired to offer additional support to these populations. Among the services that will be provided are assessments of student learning styles and student skill levels. A prescriptive plan will be developed for individual students. Follow-up is planned to determine the effectiveness of these efforts.

MORAINE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Assessment and placement is required for all English, reading, and mathematics courses. The Standards of Academic Progress policy has been expanded to include academic caution, probation, suspension, and dismissal. Intrusive, personalized counseling has been implemented for students who are not in good standing. A two credit hour College Success course is offered and taught by a Counselor and Faculty member. A writing lab and a Math lab have been developed. Separate centers for Academic Advising and Counseling/Career Development were developed. A collegewide enrollment Management Committee is currently completing a retention plan for the institution.

MORTON COLLEGE - An Institutional Effectiveness Committee has devised a plan for assessing academic achievement with an aim of increasing retention. The importance of initial assessment and course placement was stressed by the college. The college opened a Writing Center staffed by English faculty to assist students who are having difficulties in this area. Cross and Angelo's ideas about classroom assessment and its contribution to retaining students are being implemented at the college. Mechanisms for rapidly determining if students fully understand the concepts being presented are employed. Concepts that are not being understood can then be presented using a different approach including additional examples.

OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Project Succeed provides special assistance to students experiencing academic difficulties. External grants fund special services for first generation college students and low income students. The college is considering moving the withdrawal dates for withdrawing from a course without penalty up to an earlier point in the semester and systematically contacting students who withdraw from more than two courses in a semester. The college requires assessment testing and mandatory course placement in English and math. Institutional research studies have been undertaken to identify characteristics of students likely to withdraw from courses in identified disciplines.

PARKLAND COLLEGE - The report included a variety of programs and services that encourage student academic success, create a favorable/welcoming campus climate, cater to the needs of commuting students, and recognize the needs of special and diverse student populations. A Comprehensive Assessment Program has been implemented at the college. Assessment testing and placement in English, math, and reading is required. An orientation course entitled "Strategies for Success in College and Life" for new students has been developed. The college has an early warning system based on a third week student academic and attendance reporting system. Student services available in the evening have been expanded. The Financial Aid Office operations has been improved.

PRAIRIE STATE COLLEGE - Analysis conducted by the college and by consultants indicates that the reasons for student attrition were primarily transfer, work-related issues, and financial reasons. An Academic Assistance and Assessment Center has been opened. A program of interventions for assisting "at-risk" students has been developed and implemented. A comprehensive look at course prerequisites is underway. Relatedly, in fall 1995 all 441 course outlines were revised, updated, and placed in a uniform format for ease of use by students. Pre-test math workshop and post-test placement advising was pilot tested during the past year. The Financial Aid Office operations have been further computerized and strengthened. A bilingual Director of Financial Aid was hired to provide further assistance to Hispanic/Latino students.

REND LAKE COLLEGE - The college has increased the contact hours and skill areas covered in the tutoring program. Assessment and proper course placements in math, reading, and writing is an important part of the retention program. Early alert grades will initiate student contacts by college counselors. The Counseling Center's hours of operation will be increased.

RICHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Formed a Committee on Student Retention which is bringing about enhancements to services that are being provided to students. Assessment and placement in English and math is mandatory. Faculty are encouraged to assume increased advisement duties for students in their major area. A three-phase orientation program, which is "customized" for different groups of students, is being developed. One approach will target "at-risk" students. A second will target developmental and 100-level course takers. A third will address the needs of other students. An early alert system is in development to identify and refer students to available services that are designed to assist them before they fall too far behind in their coursework. Mechanisms for increasing communication and the dissemination of information will be enhanced. Further training about advisement and available student support services will be provided to faculty and staff.

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE - Entry assessment and evaluation of basic skills occurs for all incoming students with required placement in reading and English and advisory placement in math. Students required to take specified courses are compared to those who are not required to take specific courses. A certified tutoring program exists in the Personalized Learning Center. English as a Second Language tutoring is available from paraprofessionals in the Learning Center. The Coordinator of Vocational/Technical programs works with targeted populations in recruitment and retention initiatives. Students are allowed to change sequential courses during the first four weeks of the semester if it becomes apparent that they have entered a sequence of courses at too advanced of a level. Special early registration procedures are in place to allow students who successfully complete remedial English to register for college-level English before the sections start filling up. Computer-aided instruction is used in college-level English courses.

CARL SANDBURG COLLEGE - Operationalized an Assessment Center and Transfer Center with Title III grant funds. Collegewide assessment is conducted in math, reading, and composition. Persister, withdrawal, and completion statistics are calculated on student cohorts. Articulation materials and efforts have been centralized and coordinated within the Transfer Center.

SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE - At Sauk Valley, a recent survey indicated that students saw the institution as efficient and friendly (93 percent). Mandatory assessment and placement is provided for full-time students. A system for including part-time students in the mandatory assessment and placement process is being investigated. Collegewide orientation for full-time students is provided. A system for including part-timers in the orientation process is being examined. A student tracking data base has provided counselors with on-line access to all assessment and placement information. Characteristics of high-risk students have been identified. The college employed a Coordinator of Student Retention whose duties include coordinating assessment, placement, and student orientation. A peer mentoring program has been designed to assist students. A holistic approach is being taken to the enrollment management process. Staff in-service training emphasized improving student services.

SHAWNEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Shawnee's Learning Assistance Center has initiated a student retention project. Entering student assessment is conducted in math, reading, and English. Assessment results lead to mandatory placement. Computer-assisted instruction is available in all developmental courses. Instructors administer pre- and post-tests to document student grade level gains. Shawnee's Financial Aid Office has expanded the number of scholarships that are available to students. The college has formed a Retention and Recruitment Committee to address these issues. A Coordinator of Retention and Recruitment has recently been employed to spearhead these initiatives.

SOUTHEASTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE - The college is undertaking a comprehensive student success program in which Student Affairs is responsible for designing, developing, and testing a student tracking system. The college's system helps staff perform strategic interventions at critical points in the educational process. Midterm mailings are sent to students with low grades. Information about their performance is forwarded to the coordinator of any special program in which these students are involved (e.g., JTPA, Special Populations Project, Athletics, etc.). College student affairs staff initiate a telephone follow-up with the students two weeks after the mailing to see how many of the students contacted the recommended college support service. Results are analyzed. Southeastern's Retention Specialist distributes to key administrators across the college weekly reports listing students who are dropped by instructors for nonattendance. Administrators follow-up with students to help keep them on track. The Retention Specialist also has been pilot-testing a retention services program. Instructors are allowed to complete a "Retention Services Request" form for students with unexcused or unexplained absences. Other college staff follow-up on the request and let the instructor know what actions were taken based on their request.

SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE - The basic philosophy is early intervention with prescribed activities for "at-risk" students. Indicators for helping to identify "at-risk" students include low ASSET assessment test scores, returning students on academic probation, and students who show academic difficulty after the initial four weeks of the current semester, etc. Students in the cohort groups are assigned a counselor who can either recommend or mandate prescriptions to help avoid failure, including study skills seminars, tutoring, development/remedial coursework, etc. Students are tracked until the counselor is confident that they can be removed from the "at-risk" group. During the past fiscal year, the college added a computer blocking system that will not allow students to enroll in selected courses until they have achieved a predetermined reading

level. The computer system will not allow students to register for classes unless they have the prerequisites for a particular course. The Academic Assistance Center works closely with the early intervention program offering tutoring, workshops on study skills, time management, and test taking skills. They also provide information to faculty about student progress with tutors and testing in the Center. Space for small group study sessions has been added for faculty student meetings in the areas of math, physical sciences, and nursing. The Financial Aid Office has been expanded to meet additional demands for service. Approximately 38 percent of the students receive some form of financial aid.

SPOON RIVER COLLEGE - Results from the systemwide analysis were examined. Adult Basic and Adult Secondary Education programs at Spoon River were lower than state and peer group retention rates. Hence, retention activities in adult education are being strengthened. Workshops are being used to keep adults focused on completing the program and obtaining jobs. Topics have included job skills, study skills, time management, and stress management. Other topics will be developed based on student interest and areas where a need exists. Newer students are paired with successful students who have been in the program for a longer period of time. In Automotive Mechanics, a mentoring program has been initiated for students aimed at increasing retention and completion. Tutoring services have also been increased. Spoon River revised its Student Orientation Program to enhance retention. Efforts to supply students with more in-depth information on the support services available to them will be increased. Academic advisors will help staff the sessions.

STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Procedures for dealing with students have been reexamined to make them more "customer/student friendly." The academic advisement program and student assessment programs are being strengthened. A variety of mentoring programs are being developed.

TRITON COLLEGE - In fiscal year 1994, the college created a campuswide committee composed of administrators, faculty, and staff to examine retention and develop a retention improvement plan by curricula and academic departments. Course retention, cohort student tracking, and ICCB comparative retention data are all regularly analyzed. Results are shared with the Triton College Board of Trustees, Retention Committee, department chairpersons, division deans, and other top administrators. A complete redesign of the Triton Student Orientation Program for new students grew out of the retention data analysis and issues discussions. Team leaders have been incorporated into the orientation program to increase individualized student attention. For traditional-aged college students, a parent component is being implemented in fall 1996. Also beginning in fall 1996, an enhanced system for identifying academically "at-risk" students and providing increased comprehensive counseling and appropriate support services will be implemented. Results of the new programs will be monitored and analyzed.

WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Waubonsee Community College closely monitors retention rates and charts them from year to year by program area. Overall retention rates average around 91 percent. Waubonsee has instituted a new academic advisement system which includes an early warning system, a strengthened counseling and educational planning program, and mandatory assessment and placement. Course and program retention are both being focused

upon at Waubonsee. The new Academic Advisement Plan and Assessment of Academic Achievement Model are two principle programs designed to improve retention at the college. The heavy part-time student population served by community colleges makes course retention an important measure.

JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE - The state report indicated that John Wood Community College students are approximately at the state and peer group averages on all measures. The ongoing computer conversion process has delayed the start of planned retention analyses at the college. Additional retention efforts will be forthcoming following conversion completion.